

**Public testimony before the Children's Committee in support of the creation of a
Childhood Obesity Task Force submitted by Dena Torino
March 5, 2013**

Good afternoon, Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban and members of the Children's Committee:

My name is Dena Torino. I am a student at the University of Connecticut's School of Social Work with a concentration in Community Organizing. I currently work at The Taft School, an independent coeducational boarding school for students in grades nine through post graduate. I serve Taft as the Director of Student Activities and Director of Student Leadership Development and work collaboratively with our Health Team—a group made up of key community members coordinating, organizing and addressing issues, including but not limited to, student culture, residential life, and health and nutrition trends.

I am here to testify in support of raised House Bill No. 6525 -AN ACT ESTABLISHING A CHILDHOOD OBESITY TASK FORCE.

Our mission at Taft—to educate the whole student—means we work consciously and deliberately to help students gain knowledge, practice skills, and create habits of mind pertaining to all aspects of their lives, helping them to become healthy productive citizens. Nutrition and eating habits are one place we focus our efforts. And within the context of today's obesity epidemic, my hope is that Connecticut will lead the way in making the nutrition of its children a priority by creating the Childhood Obesity Task Force.

In a recent report entitled "*F as in Fat: How Obesity Threatens America's Future 2012*," released by Trust for America's Health (TFAH) and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), the number of obese adults, along with related disease rates and health care costs, are on course to increase dramatically in every state in the country over the next 20 years (See more at: <http://healthyamericans.org/report/100/#sthash.4wX57BaB.dpuf>).

The report offered two pictures of the future of America's health and includes an analysis of state by state projections. One future, if Connecticut and America stay on our current course and one if we reduce the average body mass index (BMI) of our residents by just 5 percent.

If obesity rates continue on their current trajectories, the obesity rate in Connecticut could reach an astounding 46.5 percent, increasing our obesity related health care costs by 15.7 percent.

In contrast, if average body mass indexes were lowered by 5 percent, Connecticut could save 7 percent in health care costs, which would equate to a savings of 7 billion 370 million dollars (\$7,370,000,000) by the year 2030.